

A Reverie.

Only a pebble, washed on the shore,
Shaken by the Ocean's enlivened moan,—
Weak and small,
Helpless alone,
In the wide hollowness of its home:
On Creation's face,
Only a pebble!

Only a blade of grass, upward growing,
Pointing a finger to the stars,—
Tremblingly,
For you and me,
Pointing a finger up to the stars:
In the space of God,
Only a blade of grass!

Only a thought, a thought of death,—
For the time will come, and the day,
The cold
And mold,
The decay and crumbling away:
In eternity of mind,
Only a thought!

A BRAVE WOMAN.

Some few autumns ago the rector of a little seaside parish sat conning his books in the quiet of his own study.

Mr. Fergusson was puzzled over his work, bothered by it in fact; finally, he sought assistance of his wife, who sat opposite to him, busily knitting children's socks.

"I shall be glad when we get rid of this money we are keeping for our people," he said, as he replaced the bags which he had been examining. "I am so unused to having such a sum as £70 in the house that I don't feel quite safe with it. It's to be hoped we shall never be rich, Kate. I've been accustomed to £200 a year so long now, that I should feel out of my element with a larger income."

"By the bye," he continued, after a pause, "was not Sarah to come home to-night?"

"Not till to-morrow. She wanted one more day to see a sailor brother who was coming home. I think I shall not keep Sarah any longer than Christmas. I don't like some of her ways. I don't know so well when I engaged Sarah what a bad character her family bore; one brother has been in prison twice."

"All the more reason for keeping this girl safe from evil influence. You shouldn't be too hasty, Kate; you are a dear little soul, but, like all women, you judge too impulsively, and—Who's that, I wonder?"

A heavy step passed the window, followed by a ring at the hall bell. Mrs. Fergusson opened the study door as the darkness, listening to the wheels.

"Come, Jane, this will never do," said her mistress at last, wiping some raindrops and drops of another nature from her face. "Let us see that all the doors and windows are fast! Get your supper, and come and tell me when you are ready for bed."

Then she herself re-entered the study and sat down to collect her thoughts somewhat after the hurry and turmoil of the last half hour.

This illness of her father-in-law would be a relief at the last, and let her husband share his property with his other children? Differences arising out of John Fergusson's marriage with a dowry woman, fomented by petty family jealousies, strengthened by the independent attitude the young man had assumed—such differences had been, after all, the heaviest grief of Mrs. Fergusson's married life. And now she wondered and pondered on them, till the clock on the chimney-piece struck the hour of ten and startled her out of her meditations.

It seemed to the mistress of the house that she had slept so long that morning must be near, when she awoke with an inexplicable feeling of fright—a feeling of something, or some one, close by her.

"What is it?" she cried, starting up in the bed, and instinctively catching the sleeping child in her arms. No answer.

Only a distinct sound of breathing, and then a movement like a hand feeling along the wall—towards her.

She began to tremble violently; nothing but the presence of the child on her panting bosom saved her from fainting.

"Who is it?" she cried, her voice so shaking and hollow that it awakened Ruth, who clung to her, sleepy and scared.

"This time she had answered. "We will do you no harm," a voice spoke out of the darkness, "if you give up that money you've got;" and then, before Mrs. Fergusson could muster courage and breath to speak, another voice, out of the room apparently, added in a rough undertone, "And tell her to look sharp about it, too!"

"Two of them! O God, help me!" she whispered to herself, and Ruth began to break into screams and sobs.

"Keep that brat quiet," angrily muttered the voice on the landing, "and don't keep us here all night."

Now surely if ever a woman was in a miserable plight, Mrs. Fergusson was that woman. Not a house nearer than the Holland's, a full quarter of a mile off; no soul near to help her, for Jane, who worked hard by day, slept hard by night, and slept moreover in a queer little room at the very top of the house; all alone—worse than alone, utterly helpless, and a woman who confessed to the usual feminine share of cowardice.

And her reason told her there was none.

"Come," said the voice in her own room, "I'm a good tempered chap enough, but my mate's in a hurry; don't provoke him. Look alive, and tell us where to find the swag—money!"

She groaned and shook, and all her limbs turned cold as the voice drew nearer and nearer; and at the last words a heavy hand was laid upon the bed. Then, further to torment her, came the thought that once this money were gone there would be none to meet the people with—the people who had saved it week by week, day by day, all the past year! Heavy drops ran down her shaking form; her hands turned numb and her lips clammy and cold, while the beating of her heart was like the quick tolling of a bell—louder, louder—till it deafened her.

"I'll find a way to make her speak," growled the second voice; "here's another kid in this room." Then in one instant a thin streak of light shot across the landing, and the next—

"Mother, mother, mother!" shrieked Rosie's voice; and at that sound Ruth redoubled her cries, and the unhappy mother sprang up, asping one child, mad to protect the other.

"Silence, you fool!" said the man by her, speaking harshly for the first time. "You'll drive that fellow yonder to do the child a mischief, if you won't do as I tell you. Keep down, won't you?"

For she was struggling wildly to pass him, to get across the room to Rosie—Rosie, whose cries were sounding strangely stifled. "Look here, if you don't give up this game, by the Lord, he'll knock you on the head, if I don't. And elapsing one wrist like a vice, the man held her fast, while with the other hand he turned on the light from the small lantern slung at his side. She saw him now, as she feared when she might see; but there was little enough visible of the burglar's face—a wide hat, a thick reddish beard, and a loose, rough gray coat, were all she saw.

"Hush, hush," she murmured to Ruth. "Mother will send them away; don't look at him." And she turned the baby's face towards herself; then raising her trembling voice, "Rosie, my darling, your mother is coming!" But Rosie did not answer her. "O my God!" she panted, and looked up wildly.

"Mate," said her captor, loud enough for the other man to hear, "take your hand off that child's mouth if you aren't in a hurry to be strung up." The strange muffled sounds upon this broke out again into the old cry, "Oh, mother, mother!"

"Now," said the man, "one good turn deserves another. You're plucky enough for a woman, but I can't waste all the night talking to you; and then he gave her a look that made her shiver from head to foot anew. "Bundle those two brats of yours into one bed, and come and get us what we want."

She seemed powerless now, and her very soul fainting within her as she crept after the tall dark figure over the landing into Rosie's room.

"Oh, my child!" cried the poor woman, and essayed to run to the little bed where lay the small figure, pinioned down by the heavy grasp of a taller, darker man than her own captor.

"Hands off, missus!" growled the jailer.

"Hands off now! Just put that other one in here along of this one, and I'll take and turn the key on 'em both, while you take us yonder to what we're looking after."

No choice again but to obey; two passionate kisses and a low "God keep you;" and between the two men she was marched from the room, followed by the children's pitiful cries, their wild frightened sobs.

She led them down the first short flight of stairs to the door which, as we have already said, was partly overhung with a curtain. This door opened into a room which had been used by Mr. Fergusson's predecessor as an oratory. The rectory had been built in the time of the late rector, and built consequently very much to suit his taste and fancies.

One more peculiarity of the room to note: the door—for there were two—fastened with a spring on being pushed to, and could only be re-opened by a hand accustomed to the task, and they also were furnished with heavy bolts on the outside; one door opened on the landing; the other, a smaller one, in one side of the recess at the further end, led into a bedroom which had been Mr. Fergusson's predecessor's, and whence he could get in and out of his favorite oratory at any hour of the day or night, as it pleased him.

Here, as the kitchen clock below struck the hour three, stood the strange trio: the muffled disguised men, the trembling white-faced woman.

But one of them carried a light, the other had left his lantern outside.

"Now," said the darker of the men, "here's the room, you say; we can finish this business pretty quick."

The small safe, let into the wall, was directly before them; below it four drawers reached down to the floor; in the lowest of these, at the back of it, Mr. Fergusson had laid the key.

She pointed silently to the drawer, which they at once dragged out, and too much strength, for they jerked it quite out on the floor. One of them suddenly turned particular about making a noise, and bade their unwilling helper "shut that door."

As she felt the spring catch securely beneath her hand, she suddenly flashed upon her a thought—a hope—a way of escape for herself, a way of saving yet that fatal money.

From the look the men had cast around the room, Mrs. Fergusson was sure they knew nothing of their whereabouts.

"Shut the door," the man had said, and never so much as cast a look towards where was the other door, completely concealed in the shadow of the recess!

which told her that the further door stood unlatched.

"O, Heaven help me, and give me time!" she prayed; but her hand shook so that it could scarcely obey her swift thought. Another moment, and she took in her exact position: the man stooping over the key, the lamp on the floor, and the next she had flung her shawl over the lamp, darted across the floor, out into the room beyond, and flung to the door with force.

Yet more to be done. She drew the bolts with frenzied speed, above, below—that way was safe; then, with the passionate strength of the moment, she sped through the room, out on the landing to the curtained door, and made that fast from without, while the furious captives beat at it from within; and then—Ah, then, poor thing, her fortitude forsook her, and a thousand fears beset her. She slid down a few stairs, clinging to the rail; then, losing her hold, fell heavily on the stone floor of the hall below.

Mr. Fergusson had reached his nearest station in safety, had sent back the wraps his careful wife had guarded him with, and started by the ten o'clock train to Fordham.

The rain beat on the windows as the train flew along in the darkness, and presently a prolonged whistle told him that they were approaching a certain junction where he would have to wait some ten minutes or so.

Two or three lamps on the platform by which they drew up showed some few passengers and a couple of sleepy porters. Another train had just come in from the opposite direction, from Fordham, now only fifteen miles distant; and some of its passengers had alighted and were making their way past the line of carriages.

Looking out upon his fellow-travelers, without much curiosity or interest, Mr. Fergusson caught sight of a face which he had little expected to see. Shouting to a porter to open the door of his compartment, he sprang out and grasped the arm of a man very much like himself—in fact, his own elder brother.

"George," he claimed, "were you going for me? Is my father worse?"

"What's the earth to you mean, and wherefore do you spring from?" was the answer he got, accompanied by a look of profound amazement.

"O, George," he said, with a gasp, "did you not telegraph me this evening that my father had had another fit?"

"Most certainly I did not."

"O, my wife, my wife!" said the clergyman; and then he staggered up to a heap of luggage and sat down and hid his face in his hands. His brother saw the matter was serious; so he let his own train pass on without resuming his journey, and was soon in possession of all the explanation John Fergusson could give.

"Porter," he asked, "what time does the night-mail go through to Wheelborough?"

"12.25, sir," answered the man; "the distance was five-and-twenty miles; the present time a quarter, or, by the time the explanation was ended, half-past eleven."

"No help for it, John, we must wait for the down-train; we couldn't pick up a horse, nor yet a pair, that would be ready to start this time of night and get us to Wheelborough before a quarter past two. Come, let's follow cheer up; I'm not taking for granted everything you read!"

But George Fergusson thought in his own mind that matters looked black enough to justify any amount of fears, and had hard work to find hopeful talk for the next two hours. He tried family matters—anything to pass away the time—in vain; his brother's mind was filled with overwhelming anxiety, his eyes peering up the line to catch the first glimpse of the approaching train.

At last the shrill whistle, the glaring lights creeping nearer and nearer, the minutes' stoppage, and then off again homeward—homeward!—and he began to dread the moments he longed for.

At Wheelborough the two brothers struck out at once from the station on their five-mile walk; and, as they left the further outskirts of the town, the church clock chimed half-past two o'clock.

George Fergusson could barely keep up with his brother's rapid stride, and thought him half-crazy with excitement when he saw him lightly leap a ditch, and start running across a broken piece of earth.

"George," cried the rector, pointing to his own house, not a stone's throw distant, "look at that light!" And through the long narrow window of the oratory light shone plainly.

"Great God, if we are too late!" The brothers scarcely knew how they covered the short remaining distance. A blow at the hall window, and their united force at the shutters within, and they made good their entrance to see—Kate Fergusson lying senseless on the floor; to hear the wailing and crying of children overhead; and a strange sound of low voices whispering and hands cutting away at wood-work.

Late indeed they were, but not too late. An outdoor bell, set clanging, soon called ready help from the village, while Jane, already roused by the sounds, but too frightened to venture from her room alone, busied herself over her unconscious mistress.

The captives in the oratory fought like cats, and one of them gave George Fergusson a bite in the arm, the mark of which he will carry as long as he lives—that was "Rough Dick." "Gentleman Jim" turned sullen, and submitted to the force of numbers at the last with a better grace.

When on their trial, two months later, "Gentleman Jim" paid Mrs. Fergusson several compliments, and politely assured the judge before whom they were tried that he esteemed it no disgrace to have been "trapped by such a brick of a woman!"

HOME AGAIN.—Santa Anna, who is seventy-six years old, is going to Mexico to spend his remaining days in the land of his birth and early glories. He says he returns under President Lerdo's proclamation of amnesty, but is firmly resolved to take no part in Mexican politics.

Employment for Children.

The annual report of the Massachusetts Labor Bureau, just issued, contains many interesting statements concerning the employment of children. The report says that the Bureau had difficulty in obtaining answers to its letters of inquiry in a very large number of cases. Twenty-one towns, however, reported 1,330 children under ten employed, while twenty-eight more reported that such children were employed, but gave no numbers. Twenty-eight towns reported 1,723 children from ten to fifteen employed, who had not received the legal amount of schooling, and twenty-nine towns reported children thus employed, but gave no numbers. These figures, in the opinion of the bureau, very inadequately represent the number of the children really employed. Quite a number of towns and cities have half time and some have no time at all. This subject is the subject of the education of mill children, says the report, "there can be but one opinion—that the matter is not attended to either by the State or local authorities; that legislation is needed to compel attendance, to punish illegal employment of children, and to provide proper schools for the instruction of operatives along with work. Personally," it continues, "we believe in the extreme legislation in this direction, and could we have the power given us, we would not allow a girl under sixteen years of age to be employed in any kind of a factory or workshop. If she could be free till she reached the age of twenty, mankind would be the gainer. This is a physiological matter, and the result of our investigation of facts in this connection, and our careful consideration of this subject, leads us to express the hope that, if no other subject connected with the labor question is thought worthy of legislation, this may be selected for legislative study and action. No argument is necessary to convince people of the importance of giving the years under sixteen in a girl's life to the growth and development of her organization, on the healthy condition of which so much depends—her own health, happiness, and usefulness, not only to herself, but to those dependent upon her, either for care or sustenance."

General Jackson.

The late Peter Hagner, for many years third auditor of the United States Treasury, appointed originally under Washington's Administration, and continuing in the Treasury Department until General Taylor's Administration, used to tell the following characteristic anecdote of President Jackson: "It seemed that some politician had been long making efforts to have Mr. Hagner removed to make place for himself. He discovered that Mr. Hagner, many years before, when General Jackson was in the army, refused to pass certain of his accounts, amounting to some \$15,000, for want of sufficient vouchers, which he had lost in an active campaign. Armed with this information he approached the General, and made the unfortunate mistake of proposing to him, that if he was appointed the accountant could be audited and paid. This threw him into a violent passion; he called his servants to turn 'the infernal scoundrel out of the house,' and directed one of them to go to Mr. Hagner and order him to come to him instantly. Mr. Hagner was quietly sitting in his office when he received this peremptory order, and immediately obeyed it. He found the General walking up and down the room in a violent passion, and the first salutation he met with was—'Give me your hand, sir; you're an honest man, I respect you; you did right, sir, in not passing my account. I lost the vouchers. By the eternal powers, all this Greek to Mr. Hagner! The affair had happened many years before, and was entirely forgotten by him. It was sometime before he succeeded in quieting the General down, when he asked him what it all meant. The General then told him the circumstances, adding—'Go to your office, sir; make yourself perfectly easy; there shan't be a hair of your head touched as long as I have the honor to fill the Presidential chair.'—*American Historical Record.*

A Curious Custom.

Talking the other day with the traveling salesman of a London woolen warehouseman—jobber, we should call him here—there came to light a curious custom which prevails in England in that line of trade. A tailor, instead of having a heavy line of stock for his customers to select from, keeps on hand, in many cases, only a full line of patterns, representing the stocks of the leading warehousemen. The customer selects from the patterns the style and make that suit at once his fancy and his purse. Then, his measure having been taken and his order booked, an order goes up to the warehouseman for the cloth. He sends it down by his porter—the whole piece—which leaves it with the tailor. The tailor cuts off what he wants, and the next day the porter looks in and carries back the piece to its owners, who had it measured before it left them, and again measure it on its return, charging the tailor with the difference. Our "jobbers" have learned that a shorter way is to cut off what the tailor wants and send it to him; but this idea does not seem to have occurred to our cousins over the water, or else it is too new-fangled and simple to suit their ideas of business. —*Commercial Bulletin.*

THE BAPTISTS.—The "Baptist Year-book for 1873" gives the total number of Baptists in the United States at 1,638,369, an increase for the year of 48,707. The present number of Baptist ministers is 12,598, an increase of 708; number of churches, 20,520, an increase of 800.

Queer Medical Facts.

The following paragraphs are taken from a recent lecture by Dr. Brown-Sequard:

We are indebted to the observation of a very intelligent negro, whose master was affected with a disease of the spinal cord, which produced convulsions in the lower limbs. The most intense stiffness would manifest itself in the lower limbs. They were rigid like a bar of iron for a time; and after ten minutes of this extreme rigidity they began to have violent jerks. The jerks then disappeared and the rigidity returned. All day long the lower limbs were in this state of muscular contraction. His servant, the negro, having to dress him, found it very difficult to put on his pantaloons. One day he by chance took hold of his big toe, and found as he pulled it that the limbs became perfectly soft and movable. The convulsions had disappeared altogether. The negro certainly had a natural genius for science. He learned that whenever he wanted to push his master's pantaloons up, he had only to pull his big toe down. He succeeded every time. And as the master found the cessation of the convulsions useful at other times besides when he was dressing, the negro was asked very frequently to act on the big toe in order to effect it. This fact is now a well-known one. I have seen fourteen such cases. Many of my medical friends have seen them also.

A friend of mine, Dr. Waller, a most intelligent man, a man of genius, found that by pressing on the neck he could produce the most interesting physiological phenomena. He has succeeded in curing headaches, neuralgia of the face, and many other affections in which there was pain or great congestion of the head. An attack of epilepsy may be stopped in that way. Many physicians before him had produced some of those results, but they all thought it was from a pressure of the carotid artery.

Dr. Waller has the merit of showing that it is chiefly—he thought it was only, but I have found that it is only, not only—through an irritation of the nerves of the par vagum, that the motion of the heart is arrested in those cases, and that a diminution of the beating of the heart was followed by an amelioration in the circulation in the head, a cessation of an attack of epilepsy and of various other complaints. It was something, therefore, quite different from the mere pressure on the carotid artery. These views were not absolutely complete, as I have found that another nerve which goes to the blood vessels of the brain is also irritated by the process; and that the pressure exerted in the neck produces three effects: (1) It certainly diminishes the current in the carotid artery, and, indeed, stops that current altogether if the pressure is considerable; (2) it diminishes the circulation considerably, and may induce a profound state of syncope by acting on the par vagum; and (3) it also acts on the cervical sympathetic, and produces a contraction of the blood vessels in the head, by means of which a part of the good effect is obtained.

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